
Pragmatic Policy Development
Problems and solutions
in educational policy making

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ASTRACT Educational reforms and legislative initiatives in Australia and internationally during the late 1980s have imposed new political solutions on to the problems being experienced in school settings. In Australia, during the 1990s, the NSW government's School Centred Education [SCE] report is just one example of the international trend towards the ministerialisation of education policy-making. This paper aims to explore the experiences of key personnel active in the management and leadership of the SCE initiatives. The paper will explore this context through recent and emerging research data which offers new insights into the nature of solutions already in the process of development in New South Wales and offer some contrasts on the national level. The data is based on a sequence of research projects. The intent of these projects is to develop a cultural mapping of the policy process through exploring the juxtaposition of the intent and implementation of political reforms. The data collected so far portrays a situation identified as "pragmatic policy development". The paper will conclude by providing an analysis of the effects of domination/liberation in contemporary policy which targets the

sites, structures and legitimation of power, and the actors' "spaces for freedom".

POLICY AND POLITICS

Education's significance to politics, long known to earlier civilisations, was re-discovered during the industrial revolution when public education became one of primary tools in the industrialisation of the economy and the reform the political structures in the nineteenth century. The benefits of this approach, for governments, were that there could be a sustained nexus between educational and politico-economic policy. However, there were differences in approach to reaching this goal which I will sketch briefly. In industrial Europe, education was viewed as a collective responsibility. In American educational history, as Power (1982: 315-316) notes, we witness a contest between education as a collective responsibility and education as an individual responsibility. There was a slow process whereby the various governments took steps at affirming the authority of the state over education, though this achievement is being reversed in the 1990s. Australia followed a similar, though speedier, course towards state-controlled universal, secular and free education and currently steers just as speedy course away from these goals.

It is important to make these points early in the paper so we we can gain some perspective on my discussion of current events. I am suggesting that schools in Western democracies have operated always within a political context, though the nature and extent of the source of power in educational policy-making was obfuscated by the intermediary role of the educational bureaucracies. An example of how well this situation worked is provided by Tyack and Hansot (1982: 217-8) who observe the 1950s as a time when school leaders might:

nostagically ruminate about what it was like when they didn't have to be concerned about so many uncontrolled variables; when their major job was "education", and no one in the community expected, or possibly would even tolerate, policies that introduced school operations into the arena of social action and social policy. The schools were seen as isolated enclaves within the mainstream of American society.

But the late 1950s became an period of crisis as people sought to explain America's defeat in the space war. Progressive education was the main target and the political sources of educational policy came out into the open as governments, not only in the USA, began to overhaul their education systems. Most Western countries undertook a total review of the curriculum in the 1960s and legislation was one aspect of this policy renewal process. Legislative and policy texts are multi-faceted: firstly, they express sets of competing political intentions and act as resources for national/state debate; second, they form a stated policy direction which has been endorsed by government; third, they act as micro-political resources for educators, consultants, parents and others in the community, to interpret, re-interpret, ignore or resist during "implementation". Though we have not looked at it this way, this was the scenario experienced by the various stages of the progressive Wyndham Report (1961) in New South Wales [NSW] (2).

Sometimes we tend to forget that schools in the 1960s and1970s had a pronounced political context and, surprisingly, it did not express as strong a conservative backlash as one might have expected. That educational policy expressed a "fragile, progressive consensus" and ideals of egalitarianism, progressivism, democracy and social engineering (Ball, 1990: 8, 32) can be attributed to the roles played by the participants, with teachers (mainly though teacher unions), educators and bureaucrats contributing to policy decision-making in what Ball (1990: 7) terms a

'triangle of tension'. School practices reflected this trend towards producer control, new subjects, multi-culturalism, relevance, personal and health education, politicised curriculum, continuous coursework and assessment, professionalism, mixed-ability, team teaching, open classrooms, educators unions, in-service education and devolution [school-based decision-making] (Ball, 1990: 45).

However, the 1980s saw the re-emergence of the political power of what Ball (1990: 4-6) calls the industrial trainers, the old humanists and the cultural restorationists. These groups attempted to dominate the view of what counts as valid educational knowledge. Their position was argued by the New Right and by conservative politicans in Australia, the USA, Europe and the UK. Many changes to education during this decade were spurred on by criticism of schools from the New Right, a process begun with the publication of the Black Papers in Britain at the end of the 1960s. These documents asserted that the teacher quality was low, educational (and moral/social) standards were falling and that schools lacked discipline. The development of educational policy - in all Australian states regardless of the political party in power - was subjected conspicuously to views from the New Right, views which saw schools as a market place characterised by competition, choice, diversity and market-driven (private and government) funding. Even though these characteristics are not genuinely true for the economic arena, the New Right successfully put this 'economic rationalist' view so that it dominated educational, philosophical, moral or religious perspectives.
It is true that there has been an impact on educational policy from these new political sources. Yet we need to understand that while the New Right presents a traditionalist conservative view of knowledge - claiming academic work has been replaced by substandard courses - the argument is more an ideological representation of control and social function. The New Right argues strongly for greater parental choice in an educational market place offering diversity. The New Right hoped that educators could be made more accountable to the economic arena of the state through, for example, shifting fiscal responsibility on to the schools. Many politicians listened to the discourse of the New Right and those in the government responsible for education acted, steering significant legislation through their respective parliaments. For the purposes of this paper we will look briefly at the influence of the New Right on NSW and Britain. Keith Joseph (The Times 21 October, 1974; quoted in Ball, 1990: 29) Minister for Education in the Thatcher government in England argued, in refence to earlier policies,
... by now, we are in a position to test all these fine theories in the light of experience...real incomes have risen.. so too have education budgets and welfare budgets; so also have delinquency, truancy, vandalism, hooliganism, illiteracy, decline in educational standards. Some secondary schools in our cities are dominated by gangs operating extortion rackets against small children. Teenage pregnancies are rising; so are drunkenness, sexual offences and crimes of sadism.. we know that some universities have been constrained to lower their standards for entrants from comprehensives... If equality in education is sought at the expense of quality, how can the poisons created help but filter down?

Within this vitriole, the ideals, objectives and principles of the 1960s and 1970s were now challenged by the opposites: parental choice, accountability, cultural heritage, tradition, discipline, political unity, the family, external examinations, basic skills testing, selective schools, pupil entitlement, market forces, dezoning, vouchers, larger class sizes, teacher union impotence, national curriculum, centralised control. The former Chairman of the Conservative Party in Britain,

Norman Tebitt, observed,

The new frontier of conservatism (..) is about reforming those parts of the state sector which privatisation has so far left largely untouched, those activities in society such as health and education which together consume a third of our national income but where market opportunities are still hardly known. (The Independent, 7, June, 1988).

The third Thatcher administration thus set about this task with a vengeance, determined to dismantle both the comprehensive system built up since the 1950s: by breaking the power of local educational authorities, and by erecting an hierarchical system of schooling (paradoxically) subject to market forces yet more directly under central state control. The main aspects of the Baker Education Reform Act (1988) in Britain [Australian reforms reflect many of these ideas] included, financial delegation (global budgeting) rather than centralised accounting; open enrolment rather than zoning; new personnel management (staffing powers; comparative assessment & merit selection rather than promotion based on seniority); parental control through school councils; re-centralised (national) curriculum rather than school-based curriculum; educational audits (inspections); staff appraisal; different teacher education; and in NSW, specialisation: technology high schools, selective high schools and centres of excellence. These functional and structural changes are intended to alter the culture of schools to some extent. As Fidler & Bowles (1989: 18) see it:

schools will expand and intensify their activities in terms of promotion and public relations. They will be much more responsive to the wishes of parents. Market research, that is, knowing what parents think about schools and what they want of schools, is likely to be an expanded activity. (...) Financial management will clearly be a much more important features of schools in future. Schools are likely to be much more cost conscious. Considerable sums of money are going to be made available to heads and governing bodies and making decisions about how to spend that wisely is clearly going to be of great importance. (...) the "Education Reform Act" very much leaves the destiny of an individual school dependent on its own actions.

Whether schools make decisions about their own actions, or fall prey to the down-side of these changes depends on the way educators understand and exploit the education policy process. While we have come to see that reforms have been imposed by politicians on schools through the educational bureaucracy since the beginning of universal public education, the pace, nature and extent of change in the late 1980s was exceptional. Futrell (1989: 11) notes that between 1983 and 1985 in the United States of America:

.. state legislatures enacted more than 700 statutes stipulating what should be taught, when it should be taught, how it should be taught and by whom it should be taught. The clear purpose of this mass of legislation and the bureaucratic mandates that followed was to control and to regulate teachers and local schools.

Yet, in many ways, the 1980s was a decade of debate about policy - and the redefinition of educational terms such as 'participation', 'equity', 'excellence' and 'reform' itself. Interestingly, sections of the Left agreed with the need for 'excellence' as a policy goal, recognising the failure of the 1970s and 1980s to alleviate educational disadvantage. The 1980s was clearly a period of intended

reform and the impact of the debate, and the concomitant legislation, is being felt in schools during the 1990s, though not unproblematically. Some argue that public schools will either improve or be destroyed (Shanker, 1990) in this decade. On the basis of the data collected for the research presented in this paper, I suggest the former outcome is the most likely.

While the 1980s was a period of politicisation of education, school practices in the 1990s provide evidence that there is a significant degree of resistance to this process. Policy documents and legislation have changed the stated and mandated goals of schooling at primary, secondary and tertiary levels in the western world. However, this paper challenges the concept that the new policy discourse represented in state policy documents (and, I admit, frequently adopted in school-level policies) is enough to transform new policy intent into new practices in schools. As the next section of the paper indicates, this depends on whether schools reflect the political intent of policy rather than recontextualise the intent through policy-in-use.

THE POLICY PROCESS

When educators receive the latest policy through the mail or, at least, read about it in the newspaper, often they feel a sense of exasperation, even despair (1). In many cases, classroom teachers, teacher educators, educational researchers and policy analysts, administrators and those in public organisations, see new policy as injecting yet another unwelcome reform into a crowded system. Educators and academics do not have much spare time after lesson/lecture preparation, presentation and evaluation, marking and participation in other professional spheres. Therefore, many policy documents remain just that. This comment is not a criticism of educators but of the occupational climate and structures within which we work. Yet the last few decades have been a period of unrelenting reform in schools throughout the world, reforms led by shifts in political power and shifts in cultural and social values. However, as Wallin (1984: 79) argues, "schools have not changed fundamentally over some decades".

Though it does not always seem obvious, educational policy has immediate and far-reaching implications for educators. Those who do not keep in touch with contemporary reforms might well find themselves isolated, rather than insulated, from change. Blase (1988) found that teachers are politically conservative and feel especially vulnerable and avoid becoming involved in reforms in case they endanger their promotion prospects. Teachers strategic responses to this feeling of vulnerability were found to be: acquiescence, conformity, ingratiation, diplomacy, passive-aggressiveness and confrontation. This is not a flattering portrait. Yet it reflects, to a certain dergree, the situation that arose during the massive restructuring of schools in Australia at the end of the 1980s and which continues in to the new decade.

Perhaps it is resentment at perceived "teacher bashing" which led many educators to become cynical and antagonistic. Yet, as this paper will demonstrate, the substance of those reforms offered opportunities to take control and, for example in NSW, to turn the "school-centred education" rhetoric of policy documents such as the Scott Reports (1989, 1990) into local action. While I have empathy with those experiencing low morale and those who feel powerless, I none-the-less feel that the data outlined

in this paper suggests that the role of the state is not pre-determined and that we can find some points in the policy process where we can hold power and, in deed, excercise that power to improve our own working conditions and the schooling of our students. Though we have been marginalised in recent policy decision-making that does not preclude us from participating and re-constructing policy when we use it.

We will return to some of these points later in this paper. For the moment, our concern is with the manner in which educators respond to educational policy as it is formed, legislated and implemented. The intention here is to demonstrate that policies are documents which educators can pick up, read, interpret and apply in a very proactive and constructive process of contributing to the improvement of schooling.

THE POLICY CYCLE

Policy is constantly evolving: new problems arise, new conditions are set, new contradictions emerge as old ones are resolved. As Power (1982) states, "Education policy must be fluid, flexible, and precocious enough to keep abreast of (these changes)". When we look at particular policies, we notice that there are a number of different, partially overlapping, cyclical phases. In a penetrating analysis of education politics and policy making, Ball and Bowe (1991) cite these as: Intended policy (what the various interest groups want); Actual policy (the document, legislation and/or report); and, Policy-in-use (regional and school-level reaction).

This analysis of the process of policy development and implementation suggests that policies are not frozen texts, that they are not immutable creeds set in tablets of stone. In the early phases, a variety of interest groups have their say in drawing up and/or responding to Ôgreen papersÕ - draft discussion documents presented for public comment. The views presented in this phase frequently represent ideas based on responses to earlier policy documents and experiences. A broad spectrum of interest groups then attempt to influence the wording of the final policy document, the 'white paper', through submissions and/or public hearings and/or pressure on politicians to move amendments to legislation (if applicable). Educators should have a major voice in this process through the involvement of teacher unions, professional associations, like-minded organisations such as parent and citizen bodies, as well as through individual efforts, even though what they say may not be incorporated into the final policy position. The point is that educators can and should attempt to influence the development of educational policy and educators already have a number of structural positions which enable them to do this as a profession.

As Ball & Bowe (1991) argue, policy is constantly shifting and is loosely coupled, that is, policy is a process not just an end-product.. This is an advantage. Remember, however, that in the 1990s, educators are competing with powerful interest groups in this process: employer organisations, union bodies, chamber of commerce representatives, political figures, state and federal bureaucrats and even international voices such as that of the O.E.C.D. which has produced very influential reports on the state of Australian education and its relationship to our economic problems. In attempting to counter these forces and influence the policy process we need to develop a theoretical position on contemporary education policy-making and the function of policy discourse. This means researching how policy is produced and regulated, the socio-cultural effects and specific contexts and

practices of domination and resistance.

POLICY RESEARCH

One approach could be to research the documents and the narratives (personal and public) in order to determine the political points and structures which legitimate policy, that is, identify points where power is expressed in action. If we assume a cyclical process of policy formation, publication and implementation, then we have a platform on which to build an analysis of the practices of institutions and individuals/groups participating in the materiality of policy. This analysis should allow us to identifying the spaces, gaps, accidents and missed opportunities in policy-making and, therefore, to make some comment on role of the state in this context. We should thus avoid a rhetoric of solutions as well as avoiding a deterministic pessimism. This model for investigating the policy process would thus target specific, substantive, interrelated issues at the micro-level inter-related with macro-level analysis. We would thus begin to fulfil Ozga's (1990: 361) call to research policy source and scope, through detailed case studies, within a state centred framework. As an exploratory exercise, the remaining sections of this paper will present a policy instance (curriculum and organisational reforms to government schools in NSW), associated research and an explanatory model for developing school-level policy grounded on this research data, a model I term Pragmatic Policy Development. [POD].

The POD model is grounded in empirical data reflecting the varied perceptions of individuals about the policy terrain on which they act. However, it is linked firmly to an understanding of the role of the state, to be explored in detail in a forthcoming publication, as well as to an epistemological position regarding the growth of policy knowledge. The aim of the projects was to investigate approaches to solving problems as observed at the school level in such a way as to allow for a broad level of analysis. The interplay of data from interviews, text and documentary analysis and participant obervation were the main tools for the examination of the coherence of the various problem-solution repertoires in the research sites. The research was designed to assess the extent and array of school-level problem-solving practices, to assess group levels of awareness of these, to include action as well as descriptive component and to test competing theories.

INTENDED POLICY: an exemplar

The educational reforms instituted by the Liberal-National Coalition government in N. S.W. after March 1988, with Dr Terry Metherell as Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, directly expressed the need to make links between education and the economy. The same analysis applies to the philosophical platform of other reforms in other Australian states as well as many international contexts (Crump, 1991). The validity of the assumptions on which these links were built, and of the mass media which echoed them, was left largely unquestioned. It seemed "obvious" to many observers that schools were failing to produce economically productive graduates, that there were too many courses more closely related to hobbies than careers, and that - alongside indiscipline - schools were crowded with students who were unable to master the basics of spelling, arithmetic and grammar.

While it is outside the scope of this paper to dwell on this point, we should consider whether what was happening in the schools was not the consequence of increasing school-based curriculum but rather the outcome of macro socio-economic changes indicated by shifting secondary senior school populations, the restructuring

of tertiary education, increasing political control of curriculum and a world-wide economic recession. Evidence for this analysis comes from the O.E.C.D. itself and its shifting support for educational fashions: O.E.C.D. reports in the early 1980s actually encouraged governments, for example in Hong Kong, to introduce school-based curriculum development (Llwellyn, 1982).

That is not to say that schools in the 1980s were ideal places. Far from it! Many of the reforms proposed at the federal and state level in most recent Australian reports targeted serious deficiencies and, as if the case of the NSW Scott Report School-Centred Education (1990), suggested potentially remedial strategies, ones not linked simplistically to short-term economic considerations but striking at the heart of a cumbersome, outdated, inward-looking bureaucratic state management. Effective policy reform for NSW's schools required radical surgery and, perhaps, we needed 'Metherellism' to change the occupational culture of schools. Yet the reasons given by Dr Metherell's for his recent surprise resignation (October, 1991) from the governing Liberal Party to sit as an Independent member of parliament suggests that policy reform still does not have a happy history in NSW:

The SES [Senior Executive Service - which includes all positions in education from Cluster Director up) has really been a disaster (...) a monumental failure. We've ended up paying senior public servants at least 50% more for doing the same job, in most cases, as poorly as they were doing it before. That's how sad a failure it's been. We've failed to recruit top talent from the private sector and all we've really done is confirm a number of mediocre people on very high salaries. (Interviewed on the 7.30 REPORT, ABC Television, 2nd October, 1991)

Since the NSW government lost its majority (in the Legislative Assembly) in the May 1991 election, Government politicians in have lost their nerve and there is endemic policy paralysis. Officers in the Department of School Education tend to be conservative anyway and see change as slow and incremental (Hogan & West, 1980). Since May 1991 this situation has been compounded by a fear about the consequences of a change of goverment leading to massive indecision.

Officers in teacher unions also tend to be wary of reform and innovation. Before Dr Metherell's time as Minister (1988-1990), conservative individuals in the NSW Teachers' Federation in tandem with those in the Department, promoted without any real external competition and working in an inefficient top-down organisational structures, managed to block the reforms of even the most determined director-general or minister. For example, Cohen and Maxwell (1982) depict these two institutions as the twin rocks of bureaucracy on which the McGowan Report foundered. While this result may be a matter of pride for some Departmental officers and union officials I suspect that many teachers were disappointed at the outcome (Crump, 1985). Further, I regard it as a singular failure to be able to come to grips with the real needs in schools and a lack of initiative and ability to be able to sort out which policies may have deserved some constructive support. We should not be surprised, therefore, that if Terry Metherell wished to carry out his election promises in NSW, he felt he needed to create a more flexible and motivated department and a more responsive school system, at the same time attempting to circumvent the traditional power of the unions.

before and during his term as Minister, Dr Metherell (1987, 1988, 1989) promised to improve education services for people in the disadvantaged suburbs of Western

Sydney; to give greater choice to parents, to promote reward for excellence in students; to develop new scope for teacher promotion; and to open schools to the community. This time, the intended policy was supported by a minister with a firm view on political reform and a determination to make an impact on the policy development procedures within the department and/or seeking advice from external consultants. He explained to the author:

I believe that you are there to carry out your promises and, secondly, that it you have thought through your policies, and they do hang together, that you should implement them. I believe in setting your policies fairly coherently and you have four years to implement that package. That's what we said we would do, and we've done [his emphasis] it and I'm immensely proud of that. I also believe we had a mandate. You need to ride the idealism and a sense of reform in a new government with a new mandate very hard because it doesn't last forever. (...) So that was a very conscious effort on my part and I probably saw that more strongly than anybody other than the Premier (Mr Greiner). He was as committed to it as I was (...) we shared the very strong view of the importance [his emphasis] of education, the belief that we did have the right vision for the 21st century, and the determination to do it. You need to have those three things. [4-9-1991].

There was clear perception in the first Greiner government that they would 'hit the ground running' and get the major features of their reforms, not only educational, well established in the first years (of a 4 year period) before they needed to worry too much about a backlash from the electors. This view sprung from a perception that most previous state and federal governments had wasted their mandate for change. It also mirrors the approach of the Thatcher government in England in the first half of the 1980s and that of the Reagan administration in the United States during the same period.

Metherell's commitment, a little startling to many bureaucrats, educators and union officials at first, was judged to be blunt, aggressive and cavalier (Macpherson, 1990). It was certainly fast footwork and many major reforms were in place before the end of 1988 despite mass demonstrations involving up to 100,000 people in Sydney's streets. Yet, as noted above, one suspects that Dr Metherell's early strategy was appropriate given the history of systemic intransigence and school-level responses to policy reform noted above. One is reminded of Cassidy's (1985: 228) observation that trying to get teachers to change is like "sweeping porridge uphill through long grass". Again, this is not necessarily a criticism of individual educators but moreso an attack on the rigid structures within which they work and the occupational culture that environment engenders. The NSW Department of School Education is bigger than Broken Hill Proprietary (Limited) - Australia's largest private corporation - making it one of the largest centralised education bureaucracies in the world (Macpherson, 1990). The Scott Report argued this high degree of centralisation came at a price:

In sum, many counter-productive practices were legitimated by unquestioned traditions, reified structures and hegemonic myths. And although the Education Establishment was not able to hear it, forces outside education were generating a consensus of complaint. (Macpherson, 1990: Chapter 13).

Yet this analysis tends towards 'qualitative intrepretism' in which the plural subjective realities of different groups are identified and traced to the oppressive

nature of 'the System' (Macpherson, 1990). I would prefer to argue for a more pragmatic mode of theory, one which accounts for the problem-solving which predates the intended policy, for the interactions between various education cultures during formulation of actual policy, and for the strategies embarked upon during the phase of policy-in-use.

If we strip away the posturing that marked much of the educational debate during 1988-90 in NSW, we are able to see that Scott's opponents preferred to ignore the opportunities provided to play a role in constructing actual policy; though, of course, many individual educators did just that. Scott conducted a wide-ranging reconnaissance of the Department and schools in order to establish a programme of research, consultation and analysis before publishing any recommendations. This programme included a round of interviews and group discussion, visits to Head Office, regional offices and individual schools; a systematic search of relevant reports, literature and documents; identifying necessary statistical and financial data; workshops; and analysis of nearly 400 public submissions on aspects of the Terms of Reference. Likewise, there were also approximately 1,000 submissions (Excellence & Equity: 5) to the Ministry on the Curriculum Discussion Paper. While this procedure could be seen as providing a smoke-screen and as tokenism, it none-the-less outshines any earlier example of public consulation over policy development in NSW.

Macpherson (1990), who served in Scott's core group for six months, provides a unique insight into how intended policy became actual policy. He recalls how Scott selected a team of specialists to test assumptions and set aside redundant or irrelevant knowledge. The team added to Scott's conceptual, strategic and political analyses in an atmosphere which, Macpherson claims, tolerated conjecture, refutation, ambiguity and paradox:

First, all components of the new knowledge system - premises, facts, assumptions, intuitions, language, emotions and values - developed simultaneously without any one or any combination of components being given privileged epistemic status (...) premises and 'facts' were regarded as being as arbitrary, in an epistemic sense, as beliefs and emotions. (...) Second, once the new policy had been elaborated and evaluated by philosophical and strategic analyses, and had withstood tests of appropriateness, internal and external coherence, and comprehensiveness, it was judged ready to be taken from the abstract world of ideas to the realm of social meaning. (Macpherson, 1991: pre-publication paper supplied by author).

Scott had to present the above process in a comparatively simplistic model in order to market the intended policy so that the intended and actual policy might become the policy-in-use. He did this by presenting the Department of School Education as a top-heavy triangle (Scott, 1989: 8,9) which he wanted turned upside down so that schools themselves, rather than Head Office, become the focus of decision-making.

ACTUAL POLICY

We have established that the construction of any social or economic policy is a multi-faceted process.ÊThis is true for every phase of the cycle. The generation of intended policy involves a variety of competing ideologies that seek to affect each policy decision. We will not dwell on actual policy as the ingredients differed from state to state in Australia, though the final product - indeed across the Western world - was much the same. In NSW it was the Scott Report (organisation), the

Carrick Report and the Excellence & Equity document (curriculum), and the Education Reform Act No.8 (1990). In other states, the Gilding Inquiry (South Australia), the Blackburn report (Victoria), the Beazley Report and the McGaw Report (Western Australia), the Secondary Education: The Future Report (Tasmania), the Steinle Report (A.C.T.) and the "Education 2000" Report and the Brady reforms (Queensland). Nationally, there has been the Commonwealth Schools Commission's In The National Interest, the Teacher Quality Report and moves towards a national curriculum. In England, policy reform centred on the Education Reform Act (1988); in the United States, it derived from the A Nation At Risk Report, and in New Zealand it was brought to life in the Picot Report.

The main thing to remember about actual policy is that it is never a precise document; rather, policies have 'spaces' and contradictions which can be exploited by those involved with policy-in-use. This phenomenon has been noted for England, a situation Ranson (1990) attributes to the shifting politics and government of school reorganisations. While the NSW government presented their reforms in a fairly comprehensive and coherent package there were gaps, spaces and contradictions which provide plenty of room to out-manoeuvre the worst features of the intended policy. First, the four parcels were developed over a two year period and, as a consequence, reflect shifting emphases and the growing maturity of the government's vision for education. However, this also meant that there are inconsistencies and contradictions between the first and the last documents, due to some degree between the personal divisions between the three main players, Metherell, Scott and Carrick. Carrick wanted the curriculum report released first and the final Scott Report was help up accordingly. However, a disagreement continued over the division of responsibility and content between the reports.

Second, not all the key players go by the government's rules. In NSW, while Scott followed closely his terms of reference, he was anxious to produce a policy which was based on a 5-10 year implementation time-line. He did not want to be seen to have a party-political agenda which would consign the policy to oblivion if the Greiner government lost office. One can gauge that this approached was successful given the Opposition's acceptance of the Report and adoption of many of the recommendations into party policy for the 1991 election. Even the Carrick Report, headed by an ex-Liberal federal minister for education, took unexpected directions into early childhood education and publicly opposed the government's strong stand on placing the Tertiary Entrance Score on the actual Higher School Certificate.

Finally, the Education Reform Act, introduced in 1989, went through a number of readings before it was finally passed (May, 1990) in a form which included a record 139 amendments. Most of these amendments were introduced by the Democrats who held the balance of power in the Legislative Council and, incidentally, who were advised astutely by the Parents and Citizen's Federation moreso than by the teachersÕ unions or the Labour Party. Thus the nature of the final document has a particular flavour not reflected in the other actual policy documentation. These are just a few examples on how intended policy can be seen as a loosely connected conglomerate of ideas and how actual policy is, thus, something educators can approach as a resource rather than a holy relic.

POLICY-IN-USE

If we understand that policy development is a multi-faceted process, we realise that actual policies are capable of more than one interpretation. In an organisation the

size of education, policy is open to interpretation in all parts of the system: there are gaps, spaces and contradictions; policy is filtered, interpreted and recontextualised; it is opposed, contested and resisted; interpretations are constantly shifting; interpretations reside in different power bases; and, policies are loosely coupled within and between specific examples (Ball and Bowe, 1991)

The significance for educators of policy being open to interpretation in all parts of the system is that they can then use policy as a micro-political resource. Educators - and pupils and parents - should feel free to interpret, re-interpret and apply policy to their particular social and educational contexts - their local neighbourhoods and schools. For example, Leading Teachers were introduced in NSW government schools during the first year of the Greiner government in order on act as a change agent. While they still fulfill this intention relatively faithfully, they do it in different ways to the original plan. As the Leading Teacher at "Averton" High observed:

LTF2: Most Leading Teachers see their roles in terms of the schools needs rather than the job description dictated to them from the Department. So I think that's a very big change [to policy, at the school-level]. In terms of the job description we were given in our first year, I probably do some of it, most of it, but [now] I'm very heavily involved in student welfare. I'm very heavily involved in areas that were not my brief before and others are picking up some of the things I was doing before. So there are some changes and I think that's better. I think that, with the changes in the structure of the schools, it's the schools right to say what they want their staff to do, what they see as their needs and to address them rather than to have them imposed upon them [my emphasis]. [1-11-1991].

Ultimately, educators deliver policy. Teachers often do not have a particular philosophy in relation to what policy may demand from them, however, there is a response that derives out of having to address the problems policy engenders in specific situations, of having to answer 'What will I do?'. Thus policy-in-use develops, re-defines or re-asserts one's philosophy of education, it grows out of the situation, it forces people into consideration of principle (Crump, 1990a: 40). Policy, therefore, reflects the responses of practitioners to intended and actual policy to the peculiarities and particularities of their school. Brown (1990) argues that, in the process of decentralisation and establishing school-based management, schools need to be flexible, not only in the way they accommodate immediate needs but also in the way they take initiatives.

Thus, recent educational reforms need not be seen solely as another example of the increasing state control of education. Though this may be true on the surface, it is a mistake for educators to retreat, surrender or hide their heads in the sand, afraid of interacting with some supposedly brainwashing discourse. Policy, and its discourse, does not filter down unproblematically. As we have seen for NSW, Ball depicted the Education Reform Act for England as:

the product of a set of complex compromises and coercive interventions and its formation, writing, progress and, latterly, implementation, constitute a field of dispute and conflict in which interpretations and control are contested. (Ball, 1990: 133)

Educators, pupils, parents, members of the local community, sometimes even

employers, contest and resist what they judge to be misinformed or ill-conceived policy. In a recent interview with an executive of a large industrial company in Sydney, he told me:

PMI: I've got real doubts about what the government's doing in relation to so-called school-centred education. I mean, for example, I received a memorandum (my child goes to a public school) from my school principal the other day that talked about 800 redundancies that would occur in the central office of the Deaprtment of (School) Education taking it from 1100 people down to 300 - and those functions being picked up in regionalised areas of the Department but with no extra staff. So I really think that is quite a cyncial attit=ude to what's going on in government schools at the moment. [23-9-1991].

This person holds a key position in a company which has used common interest strategies to change its organisation from a destructive and divisive culture, marked by long-term and entrenched industrial disputation, to a workplace culture seeking empowerment through flattened management structures and shared employment provisions such as annualised salaries and one superannuation scheme. Reflecting on this experience he continued:

I think that involving people in the workplace, giving them the skills to solve their problrems, then giving them the delegated authority to solve those problems, that's got to be a formula that would work in any (his emphasis) institution (...) but are people going to be given delegated authority in schools, are they going to be given the resources, are they going to be given the skills? (...) So I'm really not sure the education department knows where it's going.

While the Department may not be sure of the political winds it should follow, recent case studies (Ball, & Bowe, 1990; Crump, 1991) have observed policy processes at the school-level to be constructive, opening up opportunities in schools which may not have arisen without the policy acting as a catalyst. This is an interesting tension: despite sophisticated efforts to see policy faithfully applied at the school level, the NSW reforms are consciously and unconsciously recontextualised in the process of implementation. While each policy is expected to create new conditions in schools, these new conditions might also include unintended consequences, ones which might surprise the initial decision-makers.

One example, from England, is that curriculum reform intended to return schools to the basics has, quite unintentionally, lead to the formation of what Ball (1990: 136) terms 'new progressivism'; science and mathematics educators who argue against the trends and for a problem-solving approach to teaching content. That is, school-level deliberations surrounding the implementation of a restrictive and anachronistic 'national curriculum' allowed the possibility for expressing opposing educational views which asserted instead problem-solving, investigation and application. It is significant that this pedagogy is now championed in maths and science, subjects previously noted for rote learning and little classroom interaction.

A second example comes from N.S.W. where, during a staff development day to inservice the government's new Fair Discipline Code [FDC], teachers at "Minesville" argued against the policy's bias towards punishment, as outlined in so-called Assertive Discipline strategies. The school instituted a number of amendments which

stressed rewarding positive behaviour and characteristics. Thus, from the government's point of view the outcome of the discussion was unexpected: rather than affirming the punishment-oriented values implicit in the FDC, these teachers modified the school's procedures so that there were mechanisms for rewarding pupils and, thus, for building self-esteem. Across the state, while the FDC was designed to encourage the re-introduction of corporal punishment (caning) and instil patriotism, combined meetings of teachers and parents overwhelmingly voted against the cane and, in most schools, against flag raising ceremonies. In one secondary school in Western Sydney they voted to fly the flag adopted by Australian Aborigines as well as the state flag. These school communities took the policy rhetoric of 'school-centre education' and transformed it into action not quite in the way expected by the conservative political party which conceived the idea. As stated at Minesville:

LTF1: The school found it easy to respond to what was in Scott. By then their thinking had become more flexible, they had experienced a Leading Teacher [new school executive position, a "deputy principal" in charge of curriculum and staff development]. They looked at the changes and thought about the ramifications. The reforms were mandated. Even so, the staff looked at what they could accomodate [my emphasis]. They sense that 'school-centred education' is tokenism when they get a document and their involvement is limited to "Respond by ---". But, at the school level, they are more a team with a view that this change has to be made and they work on how that could be best applied to the school. [16/8/1991]

Adding to the complexity, you never get two Leading Teachers, or any two schools, doing exactly the same thing. In "Dalesville" Technology High School, the leading teacher distributes a staff development sheet each week. He told me that the impact of change on teachers at all levels in schools is perhaps the main problem at present and the main concern for teachers:

LTM2: The sheet I've done for today is out of Sergiovanni's book and it's to do with the teacher as change agent, the impact of change on the teacher, and it's very interesting. I think if teachers took the time to read it through they'd perhaps say 'This is me, I need clear expectations, I need to have some future certainty, I need to have some control over what I'm doing'. Yet they [control, certainty] don't exist in the system at the moment. [20-9-91].

As another participant in the research ("Bridgetown" High) observed, when I asked about the impact of the Scott School-Centred Education Report (1990):

LTM5: Well, there's been some discussion on it but not a lot of value is put on it because I don't think they see at the moment that it affects their classroom teaching. It's largely an organisational sort of change so there's not a lot of concern about it really. There's concern in as much as resources are coming from a different place (but..) what they do day-to-day doesn't make a great deal of difference [24-8-1990].

The Leading Teacher at "Surfside" High defined this situation in the following way:

LTM1: Teachers react to individual branches rather than the tree, whereas the administrators and policy-makers take an holistic view [16-8-1991].

Yet this division need not occur if we approach getting things changed and involving

people as the same task. This process can be put into a model which I call Pragmatic Policy Development..

PRAGMATISM

In using the term 'pragmatic' I am referring to the philosophy of pragmatism rather than to its generally understood attribute of opportunistic and hard-nosed action. Pragmatism is currently enjoying a revival in interest in the 1990s and there is a particular resurgence of interest in the educational philosophy of John Dewey, a figurehead for progressive educational thought who was attacked, more by implication, in the shift to the Right in educational policy in the 1980s. Of Pragmatism itself, Scheffler (1986: p. ix-x) writes:

In its efforts to clarify and extend the methods of science, and to strengthen the prospects of freedom and intelligence in the contemporary world, it represents also a philosophical orientation of urgent general interest. (...) It addresses itself not only to the problems of philosophers but also to problems of men (...) emphasising always the primary significance of critical thought, logical method, and the test of experience in all realms of endeavour. (...) I applaud the conception of philosophy exemplified by the pramatist's work. That philosophy ought to connect detail with principle, analysis with vision - that it should employ the resources of its tradition and its uncompromising logical criticism in illuminating the main realms of life and the problems of current thought and action... .

Pragmatism began as, and remains, a mediating philosophy. Dewey viewed education as a continual growth, therefore, the function of schooling is to "enable individuals to develop in power and awareness" through linking "available knowledge with the live context beyond the classroom", that is, to allow individuals to develop critical methods of thought (Scheffler, 1986: p. 240-4). For Dewey, the primary goal of the school is its long-range transformation of society through seeking solutions to the problems of the larger culture, a society illuminated by critical intelligence.

Pragmatism offers school leaders a very powerful tool for dealing with educational policy. Pragmatism attempts to construe educational policy, under the conditions of increased powers of social control, so that control may be vested in those whom the policy affects. Thus, a model for pragmatic policy development entails two stages: problem-finding and problem-solving. PPD emphasises the coherent and mutually beneficial problem-solving and learning capabilities of groups and of the school organsiation itself. It suggests that first, we need to confront competing perspectives about the policy and identify problems by specifying points of agreement and conflict; second, deciding which of these points share common ground which provides a platform on which the merits of the competing views can be assessed and solutions attempted.

PRAGMATIC ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT

STAGE 1 PROBLEM-FINDING

1) Determine what you regard as the problem situation;
2) Determine what others regard as their problems;
3) Determine whether there are different problems for different groups;

4) Determine how you - and others - see different solutions.

STAGE 2 PROBLEM-SOLVING

5) Analyse these solutions (options) to discover the extent to which they agree (find the common ground, touchstone);
6) Determine the effectiveness of common solutions for common problems by gauging their internal and mutual coherence;
7) Negotiate the implementation of one of the solutions and 'research' its success.
8) Attempt another solution/option.
9) Return to Stage One

Based on Walker & Moran (1983: 22) The Coherence Model

An example of this model comes from "Averton" High School during the process of developing the new curriculum Key Learning Areas - mandated in Excellence and Equity - into school practices. The Leading Teacher explained:

LTF2: Head teachers, of course, are being affected by the introduction of Key Learning Areas [KLA]. A number of them in the core subjects [English, Maths Science] are probably working on much as they always have, but in other areas of the school there are a number of concerns. I've been working with them to try and get the best for the school, the best for the staff, and I think we've done fairly well in that area. The "Human Society and Its Environments" [new KLA] is the pulling together of the social science and history departments into one faculty. Traditionally, being friendly rivals, we've got them to a stage - they've got themselves [her emphasis] to a stage - where they can sit down and say this is what we're going to do and they've planned for the next four years (...). They've come up with a very sensible and an educationally sound arrangement for how they're going to teach that Key Learning Area and there's been no antagonism, no unpleasantness at all.

SC: I'M interesting in the way you corrected yourself from "We got them" to "They got themselves".

LTF2: Right. We have a very capable Head Teacher: Social Science here and a very supportive Head Teacher: History. I have talked with them on occasions and we've had meetings together. But really, they are responsible for their staff in their faculty and without their enthusiasm and their organistional skills, it wouldn't have happened. I couldn't say I did it. It was a team effort. They did it. The head teachers were able to present a scenario to them [assistant teachers] and have them come up and say 'Yes, I think we can agree to do that, we can all work together on this'. So it's a real team effort with some fairly strong direction from the head teachers and some fairly solid negotiation up here before they went down there. But there was never any ill-feeling or any concern.

I think Home Science is probably in a different situation as it in in most schools [their professional organisation put significant political pressure on the government and Department to change its policy]. But again, we've had a lot of inservicing on "Technology and Design" [the new KLA name for the old subject areas, Home Science and Industrial Arts]. There are a lot of people who are still

concerned. But I think, once again, by moving slowly and by keeping people informed and meeting with them and talking with them and bringing them along, I don't think we're going to have problems there either. (...) We have Agriculture in this school which is another element which comes in. So we have the Industrial Arts staff, the Home Economics staff, the Agricultiure teachers and the Computer teachers feeling as if 'Hey, we should be involved in this too'. So it was a very big group to try to bring together to try and work through a siutation. And we're only part way through it but I think we're headed in the right direction. [1-11-1991].

When we have a significant degree of agreement over what problems an school faces in dealing with policy, and over possible solutions, then we have a starting point which can be used to reach a productive (though necessarily transitory) resolution of the issue. I recognise that these teachers were operating within limited degrees of freedom, limits set by a powerful centralised bureaucracy and a conservative political government. I am not suggesting that practitioners can overturn the increasingly barbaric view of knowledge validated by new curriculum policies in NSW and the UK. However, there is no point in some group coming up with a Ògreat solutionÓ if it does not concur with the perspectives of those people affected by the problem, and this has been the classic error in the policy process. What Averton High demonstrates is the ability of actors in the policy process to indentify spaces within which they can develop their own freedom. While it may not immediately change the intended policy, it changes - quite openly - the policy intent in practice. This phenomenon generates what I call Ôpolicy competition Ô.

KEY FACTORS IN PRAGMATIC POLICY DEVELOPMENT

1) The point of departure for PPD is always your own conditions.
2) PPD is a lived testing of problems and competing solutions.
3) There is no division between political, bureaucractic and professional activity.
4) PPD allows for more equal sharing of power.
5) PPD sees power as negotiated, in different contexts and over different problems.
6) PPD means educators share as many perspectives as is possible.
7) PPD engenders a shared, democratic and productive capacity within individuals.
8) PPD occurs when micro-political dimensions of decisions are taken into account.
9) PPD involves the ability to translate formal goals into concrete practical action.
10) PPD means positive occupational learning.

All educators need a chance to participate productively and democratically in some phase of the policy process. The dominant models, however enlightened the rhetoric, concentrate on top-down strategies, stage-managed and differentiated policy development and implementation. While "what works" in one school may not suit another, Pragmatic Curriculum Development offers an alternative opportunity to introduce a coherent and replicable procedure for dealing with educational policy at, for example, the school level. As this level builds in strength, it shifts the challenges the justification of policy and shifts the educational focus away from

the higher levels. In a private interview with a member of the Board of Studies, it was suggested that ÔauthorÕ of the NSW curriculum document ÒEducation and EquityÓ, Dr Lesley Lynch, now concedes that there are aspects which she would change. While I am positive that pressure from the school-level has contributed to this change of heart, I also admit that it may be an example of my earlier observation about the effects of shifting political winds on career bureaucrats.

The preceding analysis suggests a degree of optimism for the future. It is a sound analysis based on extensive longitudinal research in N.S.W., (Crump, 1991), England, (Ball and Bowe, 1991; 1990) and the U.S.A. (Apple, 1986). It is an analysis which understands that we are dealing with a very complex issue and that there can be no single ideal process, strategy or explanation. It also recognises that this analysis contains its own values basis, just as the policies do themselves. The initiation of new educational policy, almost by definition, entails conflict between powerful vested interest within schools and between different levels of education and the system. However, educators should be optimistic, they should be willing to take risks, they should be prepared to conject, refute, elaborate and philosophise on educational policy.

Wallin (1984) has demonstrated that the 'simple imposition conception' of the policy process, as often held by politicians and high officials, is purely illusory. Educators can and do bargain over policy directives and synthesise policy directives on the strength of their professional knowledge and teaching experience. When this occurs they turn their school culture into one supportive of a vibrant organisation, one where the staff have a commitment to determine the fate of the school, one which has clear goals, one which manages through empowerment rather than top-down authority, one with collaborative horizontal relations, one with high expectations of pupils and one where parents are involved.

REFLECTIONS

Policy rhetoric rarely matches policy reality. I regard this as the strength, rather than the weakness, of the policy process. While many of us were disappointed at the failure of Non-Sexist and Equal Employment Opportunity to take hold in the 1980s, we should admit that during this time significant gains were made in understanding sexism/racism and in refining appropriate participative strategies, ones which were not themselves as patronising, romanticised or plain wrong as some of the initial ideas (Crump, 1990c). We should also admit the political nature of those policies. Now that we are faced with curriculum and management policies, the discourse of which many of us find offensive, simplistic and limiting, there is no need to feel defeated. Just as those policies we supported were resisted, so are these we ourselves contest. And, in the process, schools will be better places.

In many situations, educators have been credibly proactive in taking the policy directive and changing their school for the better, often in the face of quite powerful restraints. While openly critical of many oppressive aspects of educators' occupational cultures, I am full of a sense of wonder at what many educators - increasingly in cahoots with their students and local community - strive for and achieve "against all odds". If teachers - in tandem with their school community and interested outsiders - set out to exploit this situation by participating in policy development, legitimation and practice, then they are serving the interests of their pupils (and their own interests) more effectively than reacting to policy announcements as if they were predetermined, inalterable and the outcome inevitable.

A school climate supportive of this approach should improve acceptance of responsibility for decisions, risk-taking, self-confidence and job satisfaction (Hayes & Ross, 1989), not only in teachers but also in their pupils. This will be a school system marked by trust rather than control.

However, in bargaining and persuading their way through the reform agenda, educators will have to be careful not to become embroiled in the organisational impetus for stability rather than change. In the 1990s, there is broad political support for reform which can be exploited. However, there are many mountains to move. This paper has argued that much of recent reformist policy is neither benevolent nor benign, however, it may create a context in which progressive decisions can be taken by those at school-level. I am convinced that this is the one aspect of policy which does not change.

NOTES

(1) This section of the paper has been developed from earlier work which is to be published in February, 1992 as a chapter in T.J. Lovat, Sociology For Educators, Wentworth Falls: Social Science Press.

(2) Indeed, the Wyndham Committee began because it was judged that the 1946 proposals of the Board of Education Òhad been unable to translte into pratcie (p.33).

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